

Additional Comments to Appeal

First, let me thank you for your time to review this matter. I am not only doing this petition for myself but for the other the hundred/thousands of customers of the Watson Post Office. Second, please find my additional comments related to the Postal Service response to the appeal.

In the background section – when the original figures and daily tabulations were done (which is now over 3 years old) the facts about the area and services were obtained from a 1st OIC, Petrina Carter, who's prior job with the post office had nothing to do with a rural post office and the procedures, she did not live in the area, lived over 50 miles away and didn't have any knowledge of the community and was later transferred due to bad customer service. Since her departure the PO Box rentals and sales have dramatically increased. Also the savings that are quoted was based on a retired Postmaster salary (which is much higher than someone they would have moved there) that is not an accurate reflection on savings.

It continually states the same services are provided at the CPO and that is not true, no money orders and no option to use credit/debit cards. Also the mileage the Gardendale and Forestdale Post office is incorrect.

Also the letter that they reference from the Manager of Postal Office Operations state that the decision hadn't already been made is inaccurate. According to Post Office Documents, they had begun negotiations to move the Watson Post Office to the Brookside location. Thus the name Brookside/Watson CPO. I have also included some Birmingham New articles with some information. While they might have followed the specific guidelines it doesn't mean they did so correctly or honestly. I personally meet and talked with Mike Allison on many occasions and he would continually state – we have no intentions of closing the Watson Post Office, when days and weeks before he had signed letters and contracts agreeing to the Brookside/Watson CPO.

The financial savings they keep referring to includes expenses that will continue – for example the truck route for delivery, it will still come the same way even if Watson location is closed. Also it was stated at the community meeting and the returned questionnaires that no one from the Watson Post Office would move their po box to the CPO location, and would get delivery at their houses. You will be adding an additional 100+ houses/businesses to a delivery route, that is almost a full rural route...more personnel, more equipment, more gas, expenses, etc... - and the Post Office stated that it would only cost an additional \$3500 a year to add that those 100+ to a route. – That's such a major understatement. Talk about misrepresenting the facts.

In the statement on page 7 of the Comments to Appeal. The Post Office state is was Dec 19, 2008 that it was damaged by the flood. Actually the flood happened in 2003, FEMA bought the building out in 2004 and it was to be torn down in 2009 – thus the move on Dec 19, 2009. It was also found out during this process of evaluations that the Brookside Post Office had been giving free boxes to the residents of the local house project – those numbers are used in reporting Brookside numbers and box rentals – which is

another inaccuracy. At no time did the customers of Brookside ever receive less service at the Watson location after they were moved to that location (The Brookside location did not have 24 hour access to their PO Boxes so they could only get the mail when the Post Office was open.) Also the landlord of the Watson Post Office agreed and offered on several occasions to do any renovations necessary without increasing the rent to accommodate more boxes. What a real savings that would have been for the Post Office, no wonder the Post Office is in bad financial shape.

It also states that the Watson area is made up on mainly retired people and those that commute to work – another false fact – given by the OIC during the initial report. There are numerous businesses that have boxes at the Watson Post Office. It also stated there were no churches to be found in our area, another false fact (due to the fact the person doing the report had no knowledge of the area). Mineral Springs Baptist and Republic Baptist are both within ½ mile of the post office. I'm sure when the Post Office cashes those churches checks they believe they are where they say they're located.

In all actuality, the Watson community has continued to grow while the Brookside reports in the recent census a negative growth. Why close a post office in a growing area.

It is of my opinion and shown thru documentation the Post Office has now changed its story on the savings, it once was combining the 2 was a savings and now they went ahead and opened up the CPO – so they are now stating they shouldn't use the Brookside numbers in the savings. IF they had done the correct considerations, fact finding and taking into account the way the geographical location is moving, the Post Office should have never opened the CPO and kept Watson with little or no additional cost – both offices could have operated out of Watson (the landlord offered and was never given a chance).

Thank you for your time. I realize I do not have the lawyer and legal terminology in my comments but the facts are the facts....the Post Office is giving wrong information regarding numbers of savings and they are just trying to throw this closing in the pile of all the other closings of the Post Office hoping it will slip thru and not be over turned because it was not handled properly.

Tuesday, April 7, 2009

BROOKSIDE

Post office proposal approved

The Brookside Town Council adopted a proposal Monday to sign a contract with the U.S. Postal Service to operate a post office in the town's municipal complex.

Why: The town post office closed in September. The building flooded in 2003 and later reopened, but town officials have been planning to open a new post office in the new municipal complex for years.

Impact: The proposal calls for the U.S. Postal Service to pay Brookside about \$60,000 a year to operate the Brookside-Watson Community Post Office. Brookside leaders estimate it will cost about \$49,000 a year to operate. The Postal Service has not yet approved the contract, Mayor Roger McCondichie said.

Monique Fields

By MONIQUE FIELDS

News staff writer

The Brookside Town Council passed a motion last week to sign a contract with the U.S. Postal Service so that the town can have a post office again.

"It's like having a church or school," Mayor Roger McCondichie said. "It's just something that goes with the community."

The town's only post office closed in December after the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, deemed the building unsuitable. If a contract is signed, the postal service will pay Brookside to operate a post office, and the town will provide a building, utilities and hire employees, town leaders say.

The post office, like much of Brookside's downtown, was flooded in 2003. At the time, the heirs of Flossie Bensko owned the building, and they sold it to FEMA in 2004.

The town's post office continued to operate at the building as the town leaders secured money to build a new municipal complex in

The town's post office continued to operate at the building as the town leaders secured money to build a new municipal complex, including a place for a new post office.

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In most cases, FEMA quickly tears down homes or buildings it purchases. But Brookside asked for — and received — extensions until it could complete its new municipal complex, McCondichie said.

When the complex was completed in September and it was time for the post office to move to its new site, town leaders learned the postal service planned to close the post office.

"After a search of the local area, no other accommodations were found to house the Brookside Post Office, 35036," said a U.S. Postal Service letter dated Dec. 12, 2008.

The Brookside post office was closed and residents were directed to a post office a mile away in Watson.

The use of the Internet and

the downturn in the economy are affecting the number of post offices.

In 2009, for example, the Postal Service expects to process 25 billion fewer pieces of mail than in 2008.

"We are looking at opportunities wherever possible to save money," said Joseph Breckenridge, spokesman for the Postal Service.

The decision to close the Brookside post office, though left the town in an odd predicament. Brookside has built space for a post office using U.S. Postal Service guidelines, and the area now sits empty.

"We spent \$200,000 on a building for them," McCondichie said.

Trouble is, McCondichie said, the town didn't have the agreement in writing.

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McCondichie scrambled to resolve the matter, and the town was offered a community postal office. Such offices function like a post office but are operated by the town, not the postal service.

The measure passed the town council meeting, but a few members said they were concerned about the town getting in the post office business.

"I want the town to have a post office," said Terry Bensko, the lone dissenter on the motion and the son of late Flossie Bensko. "But I want the postal service to do that."

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